

「吉川英治文庫」

黒の魔王

菱影代理

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FREEDOM

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Kuro no Maou

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Prologue

It was a pure white room. Walls in each direction were painted white without any seams, the altar enshrined in the centre was also pure white like hardened snow, and the lighting of the room was, again, also white.

“Give the offering.”

A voice resounds in the room from an unknown place. Double doors were opened and from beyond the dark passage, a queue of people came in. Similar to the white room, those people were also completely white.

Their whole body was covered by a spotlessly clean white robe; a white mask covered their faces, and not a single part of skin could be seen.

They held white boxes in their hands; a total of six boxes were brought into the room. Unknown whether these boxes were the ‘offering’, they nimbly set the boxes in the prescribed positions, and left the room.

A sound of locking could be heard with the closing of the double doors which resounded in the empty white room.

“The preparations are complete.”

The man ‘looking’ at the series of events from a separate room muttered in satisfaction.

He also, similar to the people who had set the boxes, was wearing a white robe, but his face was not covered with a mask and revealed a wrinkled face giving a sense of his age.

“Begin.”

With the declaration of the old man, the man waiting in the back of the room conveyed the thoughts of acknowledgement.

“الذين الاسود تقديم استدعاء الروح باب ربط العالم المختلفة” – ending

chant, opening the gate—“

With the voice of the person in the back, the old man closed his eyes, and attentively listened.

Knowing that currently, directly viewing the room with the white altar which was producing a light, had the danger of causing permanent loss of eyesight, the only thing reflected in his vision was darkness, i.e. the back of his own eyelids.

Soon the noisy room also turned silent.

“It was a success.”

When the old man muttered so, voice of joy and relief rose everywhere.

“Start with the measures.”

Again, the people in white started moving in a row in the passage connected with the white altar room.

Out of nowhere, the voice of the old man resounded directly in their ears with information which they put in their mind without missing a single word.

“Male, Age 17, Student—“

The personal data of the mysterious person came in from the old man. But, whether they understood the meaning or not, there was no sign of any bewilderment in them.

“Name is—fu,ku,hahaha.....”

The moment he was about to say the name of the person whose info was being given, suddenly laughter resounded instead.

“fuhahahaha!”

The old man was laughing, whether this was an unexpected situation, the men in white did not stop moving but there was certainly a slight unrest in them. Still, the men finally came to the

white altar room and with an accustomed manner started unlocking the door.

“Apologies gentlemen, but it was simply too absurd of a name you see.”

As the old man said so, the inside of the room came into view. Similar to as it was previously, spotlessly white room. But the boxes they had carried had now disappeared, and as if in exchange for it, a single man was lying naked on the white altar.

A black haired man, his appearance matched with information given by the old man. And then, the old man once more said the name of the man.

“His name is, Kurono Maou.”

_____X_____X_____X_____

As a soft light fell upon my eyelids, a faint consciousness returned inside my head.

Remembering that I was in a deep sleep, I realised that I was wrapped up in a warm futon. As I thought of getting up, the devilish warmness of the bed made my determination to get out of it waver.

A..A little while longer.....5 more minutes.....

“Get up!”

With an angry voice, my body was mercilessly exposed to the cruel coldness. Due to the overly abrupt stimulus, I jumped up to my feet.

“uooo! Is it an enemy attack!?”

“What the hell are you fighting?”

With a cold voice, what came into my vision was the face I am most used to seeing. As soon as I recognized it, the drowsiness inside my head instantly disappeared.

Farewell dream world, Good Morning Reality.

In a slightly messed up room, snatching the futon away from me stood a single woman.

Glossy long black hair, unblemished white skin, well featured outline and a tall nose, straight vibrant lips and stiff and angled eyebrows gave off a feeling of anger.

Whether this sharp and severe expression should feel terrifying or beautiful would depend on personal choice, but the fact that it was a more than well ordered look would definitely be affirmed. In addition to the good looks, her height was also almost 180 cm.

Long, slender legs and a constricted waist line, on top of which the apron worn was further boosting her chest giving off an overwhelming presence. This level of style surpassing that of Models or Gravure Idols, unless you are a severe lolicon, homo, or incompetent, was definitely eye catching. But no matter how pretty looking she was, it could never touch the heartstrings of my true eros, because,

“Good Morning, Mom.”

She was my true blood-related mother.

“Good Morning, hurry and get up, everyone is already on the table.”

Saying that, mom left the room, leaving the door ajar.

“At least close the door.....it’s cold.”

Looking at the clock on the table, it was 6:50. As a high school student who had no morning practice, it could be said that this was still early to get out of bed.

Anyway, can’t really go to sleep again now that I am up once.

“Guess I should get ready then?”

And thus today once again my, Kurono Maou’s, unchanging

peaceful life began.

Changing into the Gakuran(uniform) that is the proof of a high school student, I left my room situated on the second floor.

After I was done with washing my face, brushing teeth, and readying my appearance in the washroom on the first floor, I went to the living room for breakfast.

Just like mom said, two small figures could be seen on the table.

“Good Morning.”

As I called out, the two turned around after realizing my presence.

One is my father. Even now retaining youthful appearance of a 30yr old, he surpassed mom who could be categorized as beautiful and surprised friends and acquaintances.

Youthfulness that could even be called as that of a 20yr old together with his short height of 160cm, he looked more like a young boy rather than a middle aged man.

What is up with the body of this Father? Makes you think whether his body not know ageing or maybe his time has stopped.

Probably by the time I graduate from high school I would look older when compared to him.

By the way rather than taking to this androgynous short father, I am more similar to my mother. Inheriting her tall height and sharp eyes, at 183cm and with a villainous look, I have demon-like form.

It's good that I'm tall, but the fact that I don't have a bishounen-like face of my father is a bit regretful.

Thanks to this villainous face, my surroundings are scared of me even though I have not done anything.

“Good Morning, Maou.”

The other person sitting on the table is my elder sister, Mana.

Completely opposite to me, my sister resembles my father, i.e. cute, small, sweet, ephemeral, giving a feeling of wanting to protect-type Bishoujo. Even though she is already in college, she has a suiting black twintailed hairstyle.

“Did you make a Bento again today?”

“n.....un.”

That appearance of replying with lightly blushing cheeks is definitely worth seeing, even if she is your sister. But the one who is the receiver of this good will hidden in her small chest is not me, but her recently gotten boyfriend.

The only thing able to bring about such an easy to understand face on my usually indifferent and poker faced sister is something related to her boyfriend only. Well that's how happy she must be. But then anything regarding lovers is unrelated to me. Alright, one day even I'll get a girlfriend, probably, most likely, I think...It'll be good if I can. A touch of anxiety crosses my heart as I finish the rice and Miso soup and get up from my seat.

“Going already?”

On being asked by my sister, I replied as I put on my coat.

“It's raining, so I'll take the bus today.”

“Oh, the bus stop is far away after all.”

Going to the same school till last year, my sister also knew that it took some time to get to the bus stop from home. If going by bicycle, it would be fine even if I left a little late, but I have no choice but to give up when it's raining this vigorously.

“Here Bento, don't forget it.”

“nn, thanks.”

Taking the Bento from mom, I put it in the bag in a way so that it does not overturn and went towards the entrance.

“I’m off.”

Sent off by the 3 people of my family, I stepped outside in the still chilly weather.

I’ll get down on the bus stop in front of the school, but first I have to cross a traffic light to reach the school building. As large raindrops fell on the umbrella, I waited for the signal to turn green with the many other students similar to me who were commuting to school by the bus.

Many others who came on foot also stopped at the red light, as it became more and more crowded. In that crowd, I noticed a single schoolgirl. Maybe due to her small and delicate figure, her dark blue umbrella looked unnaturally big in her hands.

Although the crowd was big enough to drown the small her in it, her characteristic flaxen long hair noticeably stood out, giving her a definite presence.

By her side was probably her classmate. As I fretted over whether it would be okay to interrupt their happy talk just to greet her,

“Ah”

“Nn”

Our eyes met unexpectedly.

Her long eyelashes and lovely round eyes were devilish enough to intentionally arouse the desire to protect inside of men.

Sharp outline and pure white skin, a straight nose and small yet juicy lips; It was impossible to find any flaw in the beauty of her face. Silky flaxen long hair, narrow feminine bodyline dressed in sailor uniform gave a neat and tidy feeling.

The ideal bishoujo that everyone imagines, she was without a doubt a perfect personification of it.

Now that our eyes met I couldn’t feign ignorance anymore, not because she was a perfect beauty, but because she was simply an

acquaintance.

“Good Morning, Shirasaki-san.”

I hardened my resolved and decided to greet , Shirasaki Yuriko, my colleague in the same Literature club.

“ah,oh, Good Morning Kurono-kun....”

The literature club had few members, so obviously I was acquainted with her and had also talked with her quite a few times, but in terms of relationship she was less of a friend and more of an acquaintance.

Thus I had nothing more to talk to her in this place, I have showed plenty formality so now you can go back to talking to your friends who are looking at me with a weird a gaze, but,

“.....”

Is there something? Shirasaki-san is standing in front of me without moving. But without saying anything, a silent air of tension flows between us. As a result, with a difference in height of more than 30cm, naturally it felt like I was looking down(in a domineering sense) on Shirasaki-san. Maybe to others it might look as if questioning Shirasaki-san.

“a,ano, Today—“

“Let’s go, Yuriko!”

Shirasaki-san looked like she was trying to say something but her friend pulled her hand and crossed the signal, which had turned green at sometime, and disappeared in the crowd of the passing students.

“...What? Is there something at the club today?”

Shirasaki-san would not talk to me for something private, so it must be something club-related. Maybe the club will be closed today or something?

“Well, I’ll know when I go.”

But, her friend sure was looking at me with a gaze heavily filled with animosity; I think my glass heart cracked a little. Well, before that Shirasaki-san herself doesn’t really meet eyes with me, and I had already suspected it when all she could do was awkward greetings but,

“Seriously, maybe I really am hated.....”

Classes were boring, but I think they are not completely boring. I can keep up with what is being taught, and it’s not like nothing is entering my head, maybe I could find some sort of joy in learning. But when you are tired, the teacher’s voice automatically becomes hypnotism sound waves.

“Hey Kurono, lend me your notes.”

But, this time it wasn’t me but my friend who was in charge of nodding off.

“Sure but, sleeping for consecutively 4 periods is also problematic.”

With an amazed tone I handed over the notebook containing the Kanji written on the board, copied accurately and exactly.

“Thanks! But yesterday I ended up doing an all-nighter, so it can’t be helped or rather it was inevitable.”

Laughing without any shame, this guy is one of my very few friends, Saika Yota. With the end of 4th period it was now lunchbreak so I joined my desk with Saika’s.

“So, did you finish it last night?”

“Nah, there is one particular route that is quite difficult. I thought it would be fine as long as I raise affection points with her, but it seems I also have to raise some affection points with another heroine and make this one jealous once—“

Hearing a part of Saika’s conversation, what the hell he is saying can only be understood by those who know what he is talking

about. Basically, a 18+ romance simulation game's completion guide.

“— un, well this and that took up my time, then taking a break I watched the late-night anime in real time using up another hour.”

Saika has a medium build and doesn't even wear glasses so he doesn't look like an otaku in any way, but the insides are as you can see.

Otaku level can't be said to be severe but definitely cannot be called light either. Similarly, though not of Saika level but I myself will also come in the otaku category. The genre I actively write in the Literature club is also neither pure literature nor mystery but the so called light novel.

“Couldn't you just record the late-night anime?”

“Nah, it's no good unless you see it in real time! It's more exciting!”

Is that so? I replied vaguely as I brought out my Bento.

“Oh, by the way, I forgot to ask you in the morning but you came to school today with Shirasaki-san didn't you?”

“No, it wasn't something like—“

“Its fine Kurono, you don't really have to play the dense character here.”

What do you mean by play? I'm not some small-minded guy who works hard to maintain some kind of character everyday!

“I saw the scene of you two looking into each others' eyes in front of the signal. Man, I'm jealous! If this was an eroge it was at a level where you'll get an event CG! I want to experience event scenes in real life too!”

“Calm down, we go to same club and that's it. It's not a relation where an eroge scenario can become reality.”

“Is that so?”

What's with that doubtful from the bottom of my heart gaze you are giving me? I'll start seeing black coils behind you in reality due to your over reaction!

"All protagonists are like that! 'I'm a normal student, not popular, I have no relation to that girl'— No matter how you look at it, heroin affection points are at 100% dammit?"

"Like I said, calm down! Don't mix reality with fantasy. I'll say this just in case but, something like I was childhood friends with Shirasaki-san or made an important promise or we are not dating yet she comes to wake me up at home every day or eating lunch together on the rooftop even though our classes are different, such events are absolutely non-existent."

"Be quiet! Getting a 2-shot scene while going to school with a bishoujo of Shirasaki-san level is more than a splendid situation already! Even then you think it's nothing? Are you really a guy? A normal guy doesn't even have a single contact with any girl!"

"Th..Thats...."

Now that I think, he might be right. Even if nervous or hated, just being able to greet a unanimously accepted bishoujo in the morning might be a blessing already. If I had not joined the literature club, the amount of contact with females I had would also be zero. I can barely remember the names of the girls in my class, and I don't remember properly greeting any of them even once.

"Wait a sec, it's not like you don't at all with girls at all. You're in the soccer club after all, don't you talk with that cute manager?"

"Idiot! She is already in a relationship with the captain! And this is her 3rd boyfriend after entering high school! Nooo I don't want to hear real life romances of girls!!"

"Selfish aren't you? Isn't it fine as long as she is cute?"

"Like hell! Women who NTR and get NTRed are not heroines at all! Something brutish as that should only exist in eroges and soap operas!"

“I get it, I get it so first of all calm down and sit down, alright?”

With a ‘can’t help it’ expression Saika sat down with a flump. If he continued to heat up like that, he would have become the centre of attraction of the classmates in a bad way.

“nn, wait if girls with boyfriends are NG then Shirasaki-san is no exception right?”

“Huh, is that so?”

I rested my chin on my hands and looked outside the window with a faraway look as I talked to Saika.

“Well, Shirasaki-san is the good girl type that talks to even people like me without making an unpleasant face after all.”

Well she doesn’t directly match eyes either but its better than being bluntly avoided.

“Well you do have a scary face, and a giant on top of it.”

“That’s right, but I’m kind of sensitive about it so don’t say anything more.”

“OK, so?”

“Well, there is no way that there is not a single boy in her surroundings right?”

It’s only obvious; a convenient development like she is kind only to me is not going to happen, wait, if she really is a completely good girl then she wouldn’t be kind only to one specific person anyway.

“Certainly, I have seen a lot of good-looking guys talking to Shirasaki-san.”

“That’s right, I’m just someone who is among the many people who can just greet her, and the no. of people she gets along with can’t be counted with just two hands.”

“aah, I guess reality is like this after all! Bishoujos are human too

after all, if there is a good guy near her, it's only obvious what will happen.”

“That's how it is, if it's Shirasaki-san then naturally she must have one or two boy—“

“I don't.”

The one who interrupted me was not Saika, how should I say if he suddenly started talking in such a cute voice I won't be able to stay friends with him. That's not it, this voice, could it be?!

“I don't have a boyfriend.”

“Shi..Shirasaki-san.....”

Why? With such timing would you appear here? Didn't I just say that we aren't in a relation where we ate lunch together? This is the first time that she came to my class to me specifically.

Rather, why am I feeling guilty right now? My heart is thumping like crazy, ah, I can actually feel cold sweat flowing on my face.

Wait, calm down, it's not like I said anything to diss her!

“No, well....sorry, I said something on my own.”

I ended up apologizing. Well, talking about other people relationships is not exactly good, and the fact that it was heard by the person herself, there is nothing you can do but apologize.

“ah, I'm not really angry or anything, sorry.”

“ah, um, is that so? It's fine then.....”

No no this atmosphere isn't fine! Saika has already become a stone statue and has taken a 'doesn't concern me' posture.

It seems that she isn't really angry, but I can feel that she isn't really pleasant either. But since the person herself said so, I can only drop the topic here.

“umm, well, did you need something?”

“Yes, that, I failed to say it in the morning.”

For the time being let's forget about that and focus on the contents of this conversation. So she really had some message to tell me in the morning.

“Today, there is an important meeting in the club so you must come.”

“Meeting? Is that so..got it I'll make sure.”

I didn't hear anything about this yesterday.....well there must be something urgent considering that she went through all the trouble to come to me. At the end of the day, there is no change in plans to go to the club.

“un, well then....I'll be waiting.”

“Yeah, thanks.”

Like this after finishing our business-like talk, Shirasaki-san left the classroom with a quick pace.

“Man, bishoujos sure have an unusually high impact, don't they?

This cold-hearted friend of mine who was quite until know came back to life.

“Saika, couldn't you have helped me by following up or something?”

“No way, impossible! In the first place I'm not an acquaintance either, but good thing you found a solution right?”

Could you call that calming down? I only saw my affection points going down quickly.

“So it seems Shirasaki-san doesn't have a boyfriend. Good for you Kurono! You still have a chance!”

“ahh, again the same topic.”

“High school life means romance events right?”

“Weren’t you against it in real life?”

“Alright! Now even I’m motivated! Oi Kurono, next time introduce me to Shirasaki-san!

“Do you want to cheer for me or do you want to go out yourself, which is it?!”

All I can say is that, at an acquaintance my communication skills aren’t high enough to introduce my friend. Basically, with my status it is impossible to introduce Saika to Shirasaki-san.

“Rather than that, let’s eat.”

“Yeah, or lunchbreak is too short, can’t they increase it to atleast 2 hours—“

I reach towards my bento left alone during my high tension conversation with Shirasaki-san. On removing the lid, waiting for me should be mom’s special no-effort taking simple cooking but,

“What the hell....”

White rice on top of which a big heart made with pink flakes came into my view.

“Eh, what, Kurono what is that bento!? Such love filled bento I have only seen in games!?”

“Ah, that’s it—“

This love filled bento is definitely not something mom would have made for me.

“Mom mistakenly switched my bento.....”

This is without a doubt what Sis made for her boyfriend. About now Sis’ boyfriend must be eating mom’s cold bento.

“Uooh amazing! It’s a heart,ahaha! Incredible!!”

I ignored my hyper friend and with mixed feelings decided to eat Sis’ handmade bento. But dear sister, this is a bit, isn’t your love a bit too heavy?

It was now after school after attending two more periods. After completing my sweeping duty I directly went to the literature club’s classroom. Opening the door I stepped into the familiar classroom.

“Huh?”

Unintentionally, I let out a stupid voice because there was only one person in the whole classroom. Certainly the club has very few members and many are also ghost members but the fact that there was no one else except one despite getting prior info, and I was even late due to sweeping duty, is a bit strange.

I was imagining the usual president idly chatting with others while waiting but it was not so. Also the fact that the only member to have already come would be Shirasaki-san was also unexpected.

“ah, Kurono-kun.”

“Shirasaki-san you’re alone?”

“n,yes...”

Ok conversation over!

I had no other words to speak towards that cute unchanging face of hers. Troubled whether I should talk more or not I randomly took a seat. I was thinking of too many things, but none could leave my mouth. Similarly nothing came from her side either.

Shirasaki-san held a paperback with cute cover, imitating it, I also took out my self-written light novel from my bag to kill time.

On the A4 size papers stuck together was the title [Legend of Hero Abel], a title so straight no RPG would ever use it. This is something I wrote for the first time in middle-school. The contents were as per title- the hero Abel goes to defeat the Demon King. No

twists or originality, and the sloppy writing on top of it screamed amateur work. Still it was something with a proper conclusion, a completed work. Maybe I should reread it, or maybe write a sequel.....

Absolute silence. Except for the sound of athletic clubs' yells coming from the ground and the sound of our turning of pages, the clubroom was mostly silent. Due to the awkward atmosphere, not a single sentence of the light novel was entering my mind. What, why isn't anybody coming? Wasn't there supposed to be a meeting? Anyone's fine but please come already! Due to the incident during lunchbreak, the atmosphere felt really awkward between the two of us alone and I won't be able to keep this up. Ah, in the first place I have never been alone with Shirasaki-san before this. It was always during a conversation with somebody else that I talked to her.

No but, continuing this silence is kind of painful. Though a bit reckless maybe I should try and talk about something random? That's right, we are fellow members and even if our genres are a bit different there must be something common to talk about.

Also sooner or later president and others would noisily come into the club anyway, so as long as I could talk for that little time it was fine. Alright I'm gonna do this—

“”Um””

Ugh our voices overlapped!

“ah, sorry”

“n.....”

Awkward, even though we both were silent till now, to think we would raise our voices together..

“You can go first—“

“ah, it's fine, Kurono-kun can talk first.”

Is what she said but it's not like I have anything important to talk about.

“No, well, I was thinking that everyone sure is slow.”

Incredibly harmless and boring topic, even I can’t help but think that I’m boring.

“ah, yes, that’s right, me too....”

But, Shirasaki-san also was about to say something similar—

“.....no, that’s not, that’s not it.”

“Huh?”

“Actually, that was not what I wanted to say.”

For some reason I could see some change in her from her previous quiet attitude.

Is there something else she wanted to say to me?

“Well, you see—“

As if resolved something Shirasaki-san vigorously stood up. As she stood up, the Shirasaki-san who never even met my eyes was now clearly looking at me straight in the eye. In those lovely eyes now dwelt resolve and a colour that expressed strength.

To this sudden change I was somewhat surprised but on the outside I kept calm.

“It, It was a lie... “

“Huh, what is?”

“That there was a meeting, that, it was a lie.”

What she was saying, I could not understand even a single bit of it. My head was full of question marks.

“ah, is that so?”

It’s not like it was something to get angry at, in the first place I had no idea what was the motive, so I had no choice but to continue the

conversation.

“Yes, and um, you see.....”

“.....”

The silence continued longer than I thought, the conversation also stopped. But, I felt that right now I shouldn't call her out and just silently wait for her.

“That, I, I.....”

And finally she spoke.

“Kurono-kun, I ——!!”

Right, Shirasaki-san had definitely said it.

“.....?”

But, I couldn't hear, neither Shirasaki-san's voice nor the sounds coming from outside, I couldn't hear anything. Why? Why can't I hear? Did my eardrum get torn suddenly or something?

“—!?”

A soundless world, suddenly an intense pain attacked my head.

I have had a lot of headaches when I have had a cold and all, but never this intense, no, in the first place the nature of headache itself is completely different. This, this isn't a normal headache, this is something more life threatening, something lethal——

“!?”

My vision was upturned; a shocking pain ran through my body.

After a few seconds, I realized I had fallen off my chair. Rather than reducing, the pain kept on increasing with every second due to which I lay on the floor unable to get up.

The only thing I could do was struggle inside my own mind.

I may have been raising a painful voice but I myself was unable to hear it.

“_____!”

With pitiful tears in the eyes, the view of never before seen Shirasaki-san frantically trying to cling to my body came.

Rather than thinking about the pain, or asking for an ambulance, the fact that I was causing her make such a grief filled expression made me bothered.

The view filled with her tear-stained face was suddenly littered by something like black sand.

This is bad, it seems even my vision is becoming strange.

The black thing soon enveloped my view like a sandstorm, and her crying face disappeared from my view. Can't hear anything. Can't see anything. Before I realized, even the feeling of lying on the floor had disappeared. I couldn't even make sure whether I was breathing or not. The only thing certain is the pain overrunning my head.

Am I going to die—

In the absolute darkness where all my 5 senses had been shut, I soon lost my self-awareness as well.

I don't want to die—

That was the last thought.

Chapter 1 – Awakening

Suddenly, as I awakened, the inside of the room was dark.

What, is it still night outside?

It's not like I had a nightmare or something. Well anyway, if it's still night then I should go to sleep again, there is school tomorrow after all. As I thought that, I felt a discomfort in my body.

Somehow, my body is awfully painful.

No, the bed I'm sleeping on is too hard due to which I am feeling pain everywhere.

There's no way I would sleep here. What's wrong with me? Did I sleep in a weird posture and fell off my bed or something? Something like that has not happened to me since the time I was born.....

Anyway, as I thought of going back to my bed, my body—didn't move.

I realized that I was so completely paralyzed that not even a finger could be moved. Is this the so called sleep paralysis? This is my first experience, but I would have been glad if this happened while I was at least lying on my bed because even though I can't move my body, the sensation of the hard floor is perfectly transmitted. As I was at a loss as to what should I do now, my eyes finally adjusted to the darkness and the surroundings became clearer.

.....Where the hell is this?

There, I finally noticed, that I was not sleeping in my room. Still in a paralyzed state, my neck didn't move but my eyes could so I surveyed my surroundings.

It was a completely empty room. I'm probably lying in the middle of the room and other than me nothing existed inside this room of around 6 tatami mats.

In my view, not a single door existed either. A fearful thought flew into my mind, that maybe I'm trapped in a room with not a single opening.

What is this? Seriously, where the hell is this? Why am I in this kind of situation?

A bad dream; is what I wanted to think but my consciousness is way too clear and even though I can't move, the sensation of my body clearly exists. I am unable to doubt that this is not real.

That, that's right I think I am starting to remember some things—I wasn't sleeping in my room, I was at school. Right, I was at the clubroom after school. I am a member of the literature club which doesn't fit someone like me who has a big body and sharp eyes. Inside the scarcely crowded club room I was excitedly thinking of writing my favourite type of chuuni filled light novel, no that's not right, at that time I was alone with Shirasaki-san in an awkward atmosphere.

During that, out of nowhere I had a headache.....and fainted, I think.

Somehow, the memories of the time when I got the headache and fell of my seat faintly came back to me. With an overreaction like that, I caused Shirasaki-san unneeded worry. Also, has my family been properly informed about this?

Leaving that aside, I fainted in the clubroom so is this a hospital? No, a hospital would never lay a patient on such a hard pedestal; even field hospitals don't treat you that way. Maybe they thought I died and was sent to the morgue? Even corpses are laid down on proper mats, or rather, my thoughts are leaping too far. There is no way something like that would happen.

No, but that 'not possible' situation is exactly what I am in right now. Just what kind of story is behind the reason that I was laid down in such a place? Could it be that I was kidnapped? Obviously, I have a normal family you can find anywhere. My father is a civil servant and mother is a housewife. Something like I am the son of a rich noble family, or prince of some country or some other

extraordinary birth circumstances doesn't exist. The only thing extraordinary is probably the appearances of my parents.

But, something like a mix-up—my further incoherent thoughts were suddenly interrupted.

Uooh, too bright!!

Suddenly, the room was filled with light.

Due the instant change from dark to light, my eyes temporarily stopped working. But, after a few seconds I got used to the light, but the changes in the room were not just limited to that.

I sensed the presence of other humans.

Not something vague, but clear sounds of boots resounding on the hard floor. The fact that someone came cleared the fact that I was not locked in an airtight room. But that relief was also instantly blown away.

The person who came into my view, his appearance was too extraordinary.

Clad in something like a white mantle and his head was also covered with a hood. It would have been fine if it was just that.

He's wearing a white mask. Just looking at it, my wariness level instantly jumped to MAX. Not a gasmask, but the type worn in operas, simple yet the whole surface was covered with abnormal designs.

What the hell? These guys are definitely dangerous!

The people in my view were 3, all of them were wearing similar outfits.

Are these guys running some kind of weird religion or something? However, I still lay paralyzed and I could do nothing but look around restlessly unable to move even a finger, and unable to make even some moaning sounds.

I could feel cold sweat running down my cheek. I don't really understand but I'm definitely in a very desperate situation right now.

「 مهلا، أنت مستيقظ 」

Suddenly, one the masked men said something.

「 لا تقلق ، أنا على أي حال مواصلة العمل 」

To that, another one answered.

Even though I was already in despair, I was further pushed into even more despair. That's because I don't understand a single word of what these masked men are talking about.

At the very least, it is not English or Chinese or any other foreign language that I might be familiar with.

Although, I, who barely got average marks in English might not have been able to understand it too. At least it's not English, that's for sure. Completely ignoring me who was totally in panic and chaos, the masked men continued their conversation.

That conversation suddenly, or so I thought, when one the masked men brought out a white ring. It looked like a fluorescent lamp in the shape of ring, but that's not it. But then again, what was that special ring without any ornaments was not something I knew. A tool I have never seen before. As I wondered what they would do with it, suddenly from inside the ring, thin needles came out.

Total of 7 needles came out. With a *kashun* sound I certainly saw them coming out. I thought they were pretty but at the same time I also had a bad premonition.

Similar to how it came out, they went back in an instant and the ring returned to normal. And then the masked man who held the ring brought it towards my head—

O, Oi, Oi, wait, wait a second, don't bring something dangerous like that, where needles fly out, towards my head!!!

Unable to neither move my body, nor produce any voice, other than restlessly moving my eyes and sweating from the whole body, I could not give out any other reaction.

The masked man, without any hesitation, with practiced hands, stuck the ring to my head.

Stop it, seriously stop it!

If the needles came out now, what is going to happen to my head?

With that length, they definitely reach my brain, and there are 7 of them!

I'll die, I'll surely die.

The fear of death instantly overcame me, but, I had no way to put up any resistance. Even crying and shouting while shivering in an unsightly manner was not allowed to me.

In what was barely a few seconds, the ring was set on my head.

Stop, please stop—

Unable to speak out, mercilessly, from my head, came a *kashun* sound.

And at the end, I lost my consciousness.

Chapter 2 – Submission

“.....I’m alive.”

I muttered within my faint consciousness. As I awoke, I was again lying on the hard floor. Soon, my memories before I lost consciousness came back to me.

“guh.....”

I feel like vomiting but somehow resist.

With the paralysis now not in effect, I became able to make groaning sounds like this, and somehow, also able to move my body.

On putting my hand on my head, a hard sensation came to my fingers. Without a doubt, that evil, needle spewing ring is currently completely attached to my head.

“Shit.....this is the worst....”

Although it wasn’t painful, receiving something like that torture-like treatment out of nowhere, anyone would curse once or twice. But, with this my freedom of body has returned. First, I should confirm the situation I’m in.

I’m currently in same type of empty room where I was first kept. There is no pedestal in the centre anymore. Seriously, it’s nothing but walls. Even the ceiling is also white.

In the front, there is a similar white door but, I doubt it would be unlocked. Seriously, without any windows I’m starting to feel depressed. Huh? Wait, if there are no windows does that mean I’m in the basement?

Well if it’s meant to act as a jail, it’s a valid arrangement alright.

My attire has also become similar to those masked men i.e white clothes.

Though there is no mantle or mask, it is quite a simple one piece robe-like cloth. By the way, I am also wearing underwear.

Is this a prison uniform? No, it's not certain that I am in a prison yet. But still, no matter how I look at it I don't think I'm in Japan anymore.

Those guys were speaking in a weird foreign language; even these clothes are weird. Nowadays even people in developing countries wear western styled clothes. These bare handmade clothes are definitely unusual.

No, wait a second, if those guys are a super dangerous evil religious creed, then that mysterious language, which could make even a chuunibyou patient run, might be their original language. These clothes might also be some kind of handmade cosplay clothes with deep meaning behind it.

If I think like that, then it's not necessary that I'm in some faraway foreign country. I could be in some kind of religious facility hidden deep inside the mountains of Japan.

But, why did I have to get dragged into something like this.....

For the time being, the fact that I am alive and in one piece means that I'm not going to be immediately killed. Wait, even if I don't die, am I going to be subjected to tortures like that ring from now on? That would be the worst. If it's going to be like that, I might as well bite my tongue and face a peaceful death instead. I refuse to die in a situation where I am killed while begging for my life.

Anyway, whether this some foreign country or Japan, I must think of a way to escape this place. It's best to take as much distance as possible from dangerous people like these who can calmly put things like this torture tool on someone's head. Or so I say, but for now all I can do is check whether the door in front of me is locked or not.

As I stood up and took a step towards the door, with a *gachari* sound, the door started opening.

“....”

Automatic door? That's not possible. Then that means someone from the other side has opened it.

And the one who had opened the door was, as expected, the same masked men.

「أوه، كنت مستيقظا بالفعل، كنت تتوقع من هيئة التنين الأسود قوي」

As usual I can't understand anything of what the masked man is saying in his original lingo. On hearing it again, it does give somewhat of an English-like feel but.....No, before that I should pay attention their movement.

I put myself on guard, but the masked seemed to worry more about whatever was behind him than me. It seems there are other masked men behind him too. 2 masked men entered the room and I moved towards the wall trying to take some distance from them.

And then another one came in, or so thought, but I became unable to look away from his face. That is because he was not wearing a mask and showing his bare face.

Realizing that he wasn't Japanese in a single glance, he was a white-skinned old man with a finely chiselled face. His hair was hidden inside his hood but most probably it was completely white and his eyes were blue. His age was easily above 60. And he also had a proud white beard to top it off.

Could it be that this old man was the leader of those masked men? Wait, they aren't going to start calling him a living god or something, right?

As I was sending a doubtful gaze, the geezer(he made me face such hardships, so I'll call him geezer) looked at me with suspicious eyes.

At that moment, I was attacked by an intense headache.

“gyaaaaaahhhhh!!!”

To have your head break must be something like this, no, I really

thought it might break.

Pain strong enough to think you are about to die, but what was actually giving me pain was the 'will' of somebody else that kept on resounding inside of my head.

It hurts—hurts—pain—death—

Inside of my head, a different thought started rampaging on its own.

The cause of the pain was, without a doubt, this thought, and I understood that the source was this geezer in front of me intuitively.

As I fell on the hard floor I looked towards the geezer with teary eyes. With not anger, but purely as if begging in an unsightly manner.

—non-resistance——submission

Before fainting, the ache stopped, and at that moment I realized that I could not against this geezer, no all the masked men. Or rather I was forced to be like that.

—Stand

The effect of the headache still remaining, I was unable to stand immediately when the thought came into my head.

—Stand

Again, the headache slowly started coming back. I forced myself and unsteadily stood up. It was a feeling worse than vomiting, but it was better than being attacked by that headache again.

With a rough breath, I stood up and faced the geezer.

『القيود تشغّل غرامة』

The geezer, similar to the masked men, said words I was unable to understand.

“....”

I just stood there unable to give any sort of reaction.

The geezer could send me thoughts, but it was a vague image that could not be put in words.

I was unable to understand the purpose.

But then, I don't think I would be able to have a smooth communication with them even if words could be said.

—Walk

As the thought was relayed, the geezer turned back and started walking.

Unable to resist, with staggering steps, all I could do was follow the back on which an emblem of a cross was painted.

As I crossed the door, I saw the tunnel continuing in darkness. As if ominously predicting that compared to the hell that lay in my future, it might be much better to just commit suicide right now.

Chapter 3 – Hell

Waking up at 7 a.m. in the morning, leaving home at 8 for school, attending classes seriously without sleeping or talking, go to clubroom after school, and then, at 7 p.m. go back home and sleep before the day changes.

Such a wholesome and healthy school life is what I, Kurono Maou, have been leading. Or rather, I had been leading. One day I was suddenly attacked by a headache in my clubroom and fainted. When I woke up, I was in a weird room.

There, a fearsome ring with protruding needles was attached to my head, and from then on I began an unimaginable everyday life in hell.

I don't know how much time has passed from the day I woke up in this facility. At least, I think it has not been a month but I can't tell the exact number of days.

Even then there are a few things that I came to know. First of all I, with that geezer as the chief, have been subjected to human experimentation by this group with the Christian-like cross symbol.

Through the white ring still attached to my brain physically, my actions are being completely controlled. With just a mere thought, that geezer or masked men can give me pain strong enough to make me wish for my own death.

On top of that, they can also completely paralyze my body making me unable to do anything. Externally manipulating my mind, they have complete control.

Thanks to this, they have kept me as a prisoner without using anything like handcuffs even once. Even during the painful experiments there is no need to hold my body down. Resistance to pain itself can also be controlled by them after all. As for the experiments conducted on me, they are not something simple like testing side effects of a new medicine.

From the top of the head till the knees, my body is being completely restructured by them; something similar to an evil secret organisation is being done here. And above all else the biggest problem is that these restructuring experiments are not done through some kind of high technology but instead are based on [Magic].

The first experiment done on me included making my body compatible to hold magical force inside body.

Would it be better to call it pulled out? I don't know the details but, as a result, now inside me I can definitely perceive a different energy. With just that, it might sound nice to have awakened to a new power. But that experiment was the most painful out of all the ones done on me.

It was as if melted iron was being made to flow inside my veins moreover due to the ring my consciousness was kept forcefully awake and even fainting was not allowed.

Now that I think about it, it's amazing I didn't die from the pain. Even after the experiment, it took some time for the remaining hot sensation inside my body to lessen. Due to this experience, I was able to understand the craft known as [magic] brought about by magical power, without any problems. But, understanding and actually using it is a different thing. What kind of magic I can use is still unknown, since I have not tried it even once.

But since the control ring on my head is made of magic craft, then similarly, I am certain I should be able to prevent its effect with magic too.

Thus, I who had now clearly become able to use magic had to undergo many other experiments after that. What kind meaning or result each and every experiment held; I had no way of knowing.

Various liquids with gaudy colours were many a time injected into me. One time, my head was also drowned in a murky liquid which stank worse than the gutter. Even though I'm not an alien, they even embedded various metal pieces and gem like stones inside my body.

And then, with every experiment came pain inducing secondary effects in succession like headaches, stomach aches, nausea, high fever, and then starting with dizziness, loss of eyesight, full body paralysis, hallucinations, necrosis, breathing suspension and many other fatal symptoms, that made maintenance of life activity doubtful, started appearing regularly as well.

But, no matter how lethal a symptom may appear, at the end I was always able to regain my healthy body.

During the endless cycles of destruction and regeneration of my body, I started hallucinating; maybe, I have already died many times and brought back to life each time.

After all there is something like magic. It won't be surprising no matter what they do.

Just how has my body been modified under these experiments, I barely knew. The only visible results to me were that I became able to feel magical power and that the words spoken by the geezer and masked men started sounding like Japanese to me.

That and the fact that times like these where my self-consciousness was clear was slowly becoming shorter and shorter. Not because my sleeping time was getting larger. This is the time where I am in a half-dreamy state and my body starts moving on my own.

My sleeping hours in a day was not even 2 hours. In the first place, I was too unsteady to know whether I woke up in the morning or at night.

After coming here, I have not seen anything other than white walls. Maybe in this world, the shining sun and sky, the lush green earth didn't exist.

I, only now, finally came to realize that this was not the world I was previously in but a [Different world] ruled by the concept known as Magic.

Just how many times have I fallen in despair?

I can only hazily remember the faces of my family, of my friends at

school.

Still, inside this empty prison room of mine, as long as I kept on remembering those peaceful school days of the distant past, I'll keep on being resurrected by the needles in my mind.

Today, my condition is pretty good.

Neither head nor body hurts anywhere, the sensation of the tears flowing on my cheek can also be felt clearly.

Aah, I want to go back, I want go back home——

“No.49, come out.”

Opening the door, the masked man called me.

No.49. That is my name here. What does that mean? I don't really have a reason to think on it.

“Hurry up.”

Stand——Come——Walk——

Before the headache becomes worse, quickly standing up, today once again I continue walking beyond the dark tunnel.

Chapter 4 – Black Magic

The first thing beyond the passage was, obviously, the first place I came to.

It was a circular hall. Up till now all the places, whether it be the prison, passage or the lab, gave of a very cramped feeling, so the hall gave off an overly spacious and open impression.

On looking around I realized that the masked man that led me here had already exited the room.

Well then, I wonder what kind of pain is waiting for me here. It would be nice if they hold a dance party in this spacious hall instead.

Good grief, it seems if I don't keep thinking up boring jokes I'll go insane.

Wait, will it be more peaceful if I went insane instead?

As I thought this, from a door other than the one I came through, while making a *gachagacha* sound, I realized that someone was coming.

The one who came was the usual white masked man. But his outfit was different from the ones up till now. What covered his whole body was not a mantle but a dully shining protector.

Armour might be a better word.

“With this we shall initiate No.49’s manoeuvring experiments. No.49, use Black Magic to destroy the doll in front of you.”

For the first time I got an explanation of the experiment. Does that mean that the results depend that much on what I do? The experiment was, I could understand with even the short explanation, to basically for me to use magic. To go through all the trouble to restructuring my whole body just to make me able to use magic, I had no idea what were their reasons, but at least, I knew that these guys weren’t kind enough to give me enough free time to

slowly learn magic by myself.

The armoured man who came in front of me, here should I call him a doll as per the explanation? Well anyhow, I don't know what kind logic is behind it but they seem to be moving like a human due to the effect of some weird magic.

And so, that weirdly moving doll seems to be moving towards with the same *gachagacha* noisy sound. Basically, I need to use my magic to destroy it quickly otherwise I'll be beaten to a pulp by those steel gauntlets covering its both hands!!

“Ohh shit!?”

The doll raised its fist overhead and began its strike.

Once when I was in elementary school I punched the classmate in anger who had destroyed my handicraft I had made painstakingly during the summer holidays. Other than that, I have absolutely no experience in fighting.

Obviously, I don't possess something like skill in martial arts or a hidden talent in fighting. I'm just an amateur with a big body. Still I was somehow able dodge that punch thrown without any feints.

It should be obvious but the attack wasn't going to stop after dodging just one punch. The doll kept on releasing consecutive punches.

“Sh,Shit—“

Timidly I ran away towards the back but I would soon reach the wall. Use magic, is what they said, but even if I want to I just can't use it suddenly.

Certainly, I could sense the presence of magical power in my body but to use it I need more time to concentrate—

“Guh, Aagh!”

The iron fist of the doll connects with the top of my shoulder. Due to the hardness and shock of the fist, I thought my bones would

break with just one attack, but after actually getting hit once, it wasn't that bad.

Of course, it still hurts. Could it be that the doll's power is less than I thought? Or like a morphing hero who had undergone secret modifications, I had become sturdy?

Eeh, whatever, either is fine with me.

“Oraa!!”

As revenge, I send a straight right punch with all of my might towards the doll.

The doll without even trying to dodge, my fist hit the white mask as if being sucked towards it. I feel an impact on my fists, and with a dull shock, the doll was blow off behind.

“Ho, How's that....”

It felt like there was quite some response, but someone like me who has never experienced hitting someone, I had no idea of knowing how much damage I might have done. Still, it was enough to blow it away. It'll be nice if he stays that—

“Damn it, looks like it won't go down that easy.”

The doll easily stood back up. But the mask that took my punch had a crack like a spider web on it.

It enough strength to crack that solid mask yet the doll stood up easily means I have no choice but use magic to destroy it.

It won't end no matter how much I exchange blows with doll this way. Meaning I'll have to get serious and try to use magic.

Those guys explained me with the condition that I should use black magic, that means there must be some way to use it. What kind of thing was black magic was unknown but for the time being I'll try moving the magical power inside my body. For that, I need to highly concentrate.....

“—guha!!”

In front of the doll who had resumed punching again, there is no way I could calmly concentrate. Even if I try to make it quiet by punching and kicking him away, it'll get up quickly anyway.

On actually trying it, all my attacks dented the armour but the doll itself seems to be unaffected. But to concentrate I can't keep on taking punches and there is no place to hide in this hall either. To create a situation where I don't take attacks—

“No choice but to grapple it, huh?”

If I stick to the opponent, at least I won't be punched. I don't know whether my amateurish thinking would work or not but I don't have any other choice right now.

Luckily, this doll has only been using punches with a large swing, which means, it won't use different types of techniques probably. Then, if I grapple it from the back it won't use a technique to magnificently counter it like martial artists do and only struggle to tear me off him.

“deyaaa!”

I quickly ran around to the back of the doll that has strangely dull reflexes. Before it could turn around, I kicked his back. Before it could get back up, I climbed on his back. With this my plan was a success. Although I can't keep him completely down like judo specialists, I simply made it unable to get back up from its upper body.

As expected the doll only tried to get up with brute strength. My and the doll's strength is almost equal, if I can keep him down for another 10 seconds at least.....

“gu,u,uooo.....”

Magical power starts circulating within the body, then its flow started accelerating and its volume also increased. I could feel the objects embedded inside my body during experiments reacting to the flowing magical power. I can feel it, magic is strength in itself.

If I can release it with this force, I would definitely be able to destroy this doll. I noticed that from my body, instead of sweat, black smoke-like thing was coming out.

I don't feel anything uncomfortable about it. That's because it is surging out from my magical power.

Gigigigi The sound of the doll's creaking started coming, and the resistance became stronger. At the same time I also seem to be unable to hold back any longer.

With this, it's over.

“Daaaaaaaaaa!!”

The moment the doll tried push me aside, the magical power compressed in my right hand was released. At the same time my right fist hit the doll's back, the torrent of black magical power pierced through the hard armour like a drill, and penetrated the doll completely.

Probably, even the floor beneath the doll must have been gouged out with my one attack, or so I got the feeling.

“.....”

Not sensing anymore strength from the doll, I threw myself down on the floor just like that.

“I, I did it.....”

What was that magic just now?

I don't really understand but, I just punched with the flowing magical power. Well it's fine. The doll has completely stopped working, it's a relief for now.

—*kashan*

“Huh?”

The sound hard metal armour along with movement of a doll came

to my ears.

I definitely defeated that doll just now; even now it's still lying there on the ground without moving a bit.

—*kashan**kashan**kashan*

But, I definitely hear the sound. That's right; there is nothing weird about it. After all that sound is coming from beyond the gate through which this doll came.

It's very simple. There wasn't just a single doll, that's all there is to it.

“.....haha”

At last the door opened.

And a row of dolls rushed into the hall. A total of 10 of them, and each of them lined up and looked at me still lying on the ground.

All of them were similar to the one I just defeated except one thing. All 10 of them had a double-edged sword in their hands.

“Are you kidding me?”

Up till now, under the effect of the various experiments I had resolved for death countless times, but never as much as I did now.

With shaky movements the dolls took up their swords. And, almost together and at the same time, all of them started to charge towards me.

“.....Fuck.”

Chapter 5 – No.49

Some time has passed from the day I first used Black magic.

From ‘that day’, where I faced the 10 puppets and barely survived on the verge of death even with my modified body, there was a change from my daily life till then. Obviously, in a bad direction.

Still, my low sleeping time or the shit-like porridge or soup or some other weird liquid that was given to me had absolutely no change.

And my main duty of being a part of restructuring and modification magic was now changed to daily monster hunting in the name of maneuvering experiments.

I came to know later, but the ‘doll’ I faced on the first day was a type of golem. It seems there were other types of golems other than the ones made of rocks and earth. Well, in this period I faced those too.

Anyway, I was forced into fighting various kinds of monsters.

Dolls equipped with various armaments aka light golems, a group of goblins, one-eyed giant, werewolf, double-headed chimaera, a dinosaur-like dragon, a real fire-breathing dragon etc, etc....

I was almost eaten more than once, also got a large hole in my stomach once, got my limbs torn off as well. But still, as long as I won, those masked guys would give me minimum level of healing, and I somehow was able to live up till now.

But, I can’t help but feel that if I fail even once, all they would do is throw off my corpse.

After all I’m just No.49. Without even a name, I am just a single experiment. If I become unable to give results, there would be no reason to let me live.

Even so, I refuse to die.

Every day may be worse than death, but still I don’t want to die.

One day, one day I will definitely leave this place, and return to my previous peaceful life—— It is nothing but a pipe dream now. Even I am not sure as to how long will I be able to continue this happy delusion of mine. I might even die today

From that day, another one of the change is that the time of me being conscious is gradually decreasing. Now, even when my body is awake, the time when I am not self conscious is bigger.

At that time, I know what I do or what I did but actual feeling of doing it by myself doesn't exist at all.

It's like I'm controlling the character of a game. Due to which I neither feel pain nor does it hurt. It is quite comfortable.

But, if the continues forever I am confident I will stop being me. Not Kurono Maou, but I'll end up as only No.49. the fact that this is not far away from reality is extremely frightening——

“No.49, come out.”

A line I am used to listening.

Quickly getting up, I went towards the door. Well then, I wonder what kind of monster I will have to kill today.....

I have also gotten used to this circular hall. I have started calling it the arena.

After all, what I am doing is pretty similar.

And today's opponent is-

“A single light golem?”

As if re-enacting the battle on the first day. Just one wearing a mask covered in steel armour and unarmed.

“No, it's different.....is it a new model?”

Light golems usually use weapons. Although there hasn't been a one who could use magic up till now, but I can clearly feel magical

power from it.

On top of it, the magical power's nature feels very similar. A user of black magic similar to me huh?

“.....”

There does not seem to be any explanation from the masked guys this time meaning I can start anytime.

“Let's do this.”

I didn't say this towards my opponent. A small muttering meant to cheer myself up again today.

I'll take the first shot——

“Buckshot!!”

Simply compressing magic together and moulding it into the form of a bullet and shooting it at high speed. Although I call it buckshot, it's nothing but making many small bullets and shooting them together. But it actually became something like a real shotgun.

As such, without any gun barrel or anything, it's fired out of thin air. But this is what magic is; even without a gun you can fire a bullet.

Also, an image is important for using magic. Therefore, shouting the skill name is to help make that image clearer. Although the monsters who used magic didn't do so when fighting me.

Above that what's important is the trajectory of the [buckshot]. It's an attack magic meant to quickly cover a wide range, so the power is a bit lacking but it'll still hurt to take it directly on.

Against small-fry like goblins, you can finish them with just this though.....

But the opponent did not take any impact.

“So it really has a shield.....”

And to make it worse he's better at making it than me. To block an opponent's attack with a wall made of magic, I started calling it a shield. When I saw even non-humanoid monsters that could use magic make such shields, I realized that it might be a standard to use such shields.

Of course even I can make a black shield with my magic but, it was able to make such a strong shield in that instant. I thought it would atleast crack on getting hit by my [buckshot] but damn, he is completely unhurt.

“—n”

I was to use my next attack but my opponent moved first.

Without any sound, a black flame magic was released.

“uooh, he can even do something like this?”

It's an attack method I have not tried yet.

A black flickering flame completely covered my surroundings in an instant. But if the opponent is a black magician, I am also one. Resistance towards black magic is not a property of other elements.

“Weak!”

My body is covered in black flames. It's not as weak as I said, but not enough to leave any fatal burns.

After all, it's over once I defeat my opponent. The flame disappeared without any damage—

“Shit!?”

From beyond the flame, a jet black mass came flying.

Due to having the same black magic, even though I was late to see it I still somehow manage to evade it.

“That was dangerous. So it was just a diversion —“

The true identity of the black mass was a black magic version of a fireball made by compressing those flames together.

As it flew by me I realized that with that density of magical power, I wouldn't have gotten away with just a little pain or burns if it hit. But it is still literally insufficient to defeat me.

“Anti-Material!!”

An image of a bullet with much more power packed inside it than [buckshot]. That is [Anti-material Rifle].

It is a high calibre rifle which is not meant to be used against humans.

Imagining the strength to turn a man into minced-meat with one shot and then producing it as magic. Image must be detailed and precise as possible. Inside my brain is the image once shown to me by my military otaku friend. And with a rifling pose, I shoot the materialized black bullet while making it rotate at high speed high speed.

bang!!

Instead of gunpowder, black magical power exploded and crashing sound was produced. Whether predicting my counter attack, the opponent had already deployed a strong shield.

But this time it's a bullet focused on strength. As expected my anti-material rifle bullet drilled into the shield but was unable to completely pierce through. Immediately, the shield starts regenerating but—

“One more shot!!”

For the start I didn't think that one bullet would suffice. With another crashing sound, the bullet is released aiming for the exact same point again. With a *bagin* sound the shield was smashed apart.

I shot the exact same place which had become weak with the first shot. With this there was no way it wouldn't break. A control of this

level was already learnt by me when penetrating the scales of a dragon.

And the moment the shield breaks, a moment of opportunity will definitely come.

And as expected, due to shock of the shield breaking, the opponent is stumbling a bit.

Here, another round of anti-material would suffice but at this distance it is more efficient to attack him directly than making another bullet.

On the battlefield, fast decisions are necessary. Before the opponent does anything I'll destroy it first!

“Pile Bunker!!!”

The first magic I ever used. The one that pierced through the back of that doll. The activation is simple and thus activation speed is also the fastest.

Before it can fix his posture, I directly aim the chest.

With a compressed density even above [anti-material], the steel armour without any magic is nothing but paper in front of my sure-kill black pile focused in my right hand.

And without any resistance, my fist drilled into the body.

At that moment, a blood splash danced in the air.

“Eh.....”

Red blood spread throughout my vision.

My opponent is a light golem. I have defeated them countless times. They don't have red blood inside them.

When force is applied on them, they just break apart like porcelain.

Then, whose blood is this?

“.....”

I don't have a single injury. It's my body so I know that the best.

But the blood is still flowing out even now.

That's right, from the chest of the light golem I pierced with my Pile bunker.

“It, It couldn't be.....”

I get a bad premonition.

Calm down, there's no way; if this is not a light golem then it must be some other humanoid monster. That's right, many monsters had red blood after all. This guy must also be one of them.

“.....”

Assuming that, I should have just returned to my prison.

But, before I realized, I reached close to the mask of this guy with blood still flowing out of his chest.

“.....no way.”

Removing the mask, what appeared was black hair and black eyes similar to me, a Japanese guy.

“NO!!!”

I killed him? A human? From my own homeland?

No way, that's not it. I didn't mean to do it.

After all this was a monster, If I didn't defeat him I would have been killed. I didn't know. I didn't know my opponent was a human.

.....but if I think about it, wasn't this within my expectations?

If I'm called no.49, then another 48 like me should exist. That's it. This guy was also brought here suddenly, modified, and was 'built'

like me to use black magic.

“Sorry.....”

No matter how much pain I took, tears, that had stopped coming out anymore, came back again.

Crying I crouched down there.

As I said a single word of apology, before I knew it, my consciousness had started disappearing.

That day, by self-consciousness didn't come back even once.

I refused to become the ‘murdered’ Kurono Maou anymore and completely became experiment no.49.

Chapter 6 – White Sacrament

“Welcome to the White Sacrament Third Laboratory your highness Cardinal Ars, 7th apostle Lord Sariel.”

With a hurried greeting they passed through the gate of the laboratory.

“Is Bishop Judas not here?”

While walking inside the usual gloomy passage, Ars asked the man in the white mantle leading them.

“I am very sorry but a summon from the Holy City came in just yesterday. It seems he will not be returning for at least half a year it seems.”

“Just missed him huh? Well this was an unexpected visit, although it can’t be helped, it is a bit regretful.”

The man sighed with relief on seeing Ars not being too displeased.

The man leading the 2 of them is currently the highest position holder as the proxy of Judas.

Although a proxy, he was the head of a 100 man giant facility, a senior priest. But even he was filled with tension in front of the man who was next to the Pope, a cardinal and an apostle.

Without minding the man’s behaviour, the 2 people calmly continued walking. Along the way, Ars asked the Priest about various things relating to the facility. Soon they had reached their destination, which was the conference room.

“”Welcome, your highness Cardinal Ars, 7th Apostle Lord Sariel—“”

Inside the room, many other researchers in white mantles similar to the Priest came to meet them.

The Priest and the others were all elder in age to the Cardinal and the Apostle, but all of them were bowing their heads in respect in

front of those 2.

“Please, come and have a seat here.”

The Cardinal Ars who sat on the white chair was only 30 years in age but he already possessed a presence fitting for his position. Wearing a special made robe made out of Mithril, he possessed rich blonde hair and sharp forward looking blue eyes. With a face that looked like the heroes of ancient times, that figure of him sitting on the giant armchair was indeed looking appropriate.

Ars who was a Cardinal at the age of mere 30 was certainly worthy of admiration but the woman known as the 7th Apostle Sariel was even more so. Long silver-hair and brilliant red eyes, possessing soft white skin that seemed to assimilate with her white robe was Sariel.

That appearance that looked like a doll was young, very young.

Currently, sitting on the same type of seat as Ars, her feet did not touch the ground. That was how small and delicate bodied she was. Here, she looked the most out of place but, as one those who held the special position of an Apostle, she showed no tension or discomfort at all.

“Well then, please give me explanation regarding the project.”

After both of them sat down and received the documents, the Priest started to speak.

“—this Holy Soldier project is meant to accomplish the holy war without sacrificing any of the Holy citizens living in the Republic, an extremely humane and ideal project. As you already know, the east side of the Arc continent and in the Pandora continent, heresy is prevalent and the area ruled by the evil god extends very extensively. The most effective method to counter this is our church’s very own holy magic also known as white magic, but the number of Priests able to use this miraculous technique and white magicians is absolutely insufficient currently.

The users of white magic are completely used up in the maintenance of the Republic along with the current areas under the

control of the church. We have no personnel to send to the East side or the remote Pandora continent.

But still, several clergymen burning with the will to complete their mission crossed to Pandora and are making efforts in subjugation operations but it cannot be said that they have enough people to complete it. So, to counter their evil black magic we shall also use black magic.

Of course, to teach evil black magic to the Holy citizens would be felony against the White God. As such we shall acquire black magic users from heretics, demons, and foreigners.

Fellow non-humans, with same evil power will destroy each other. Fighting poison with poison, if I say so myself. With this methodology in mind, what resulted was the Holy Soldier project.

Currently, the progress of the project can be said to have been going very favourably. Especially, the foreigner summoned 3 months back; experiment no.49 is endowed with high powers enough to be called the culmination of all our research up till now.

His ability will definitely be able to satisfy your highness as well. From here on, with no.49 as main, although ability might fall a little, we plan continue research to make some adjustments in order to mass produce black magic warriors. Today, we have plans to perform the final baptism on no.49, and by this year, no, end of this month, we shall unveil its ability in the Holy City—“

The priest who was passionately talking was suddenly interrupted by the one who had been without speaking a single word up till now, Sariel.

“Your highness Cardinal.”

It was a delicate and quiet call, but it clearly reached Ars' ears.

“What is it, Lord Sariel?”

It couldn't be a question. Ars who knew Sariel's not-speaking habit wondered in his head.

“Hide.”

With the next word, the doubt in Ars head only deepened further. Without paying any attention to it, Sariel starts taking action and says one more time.

“Hide.”

Sariel stood up from her seat and crawled underneath the giant table. Looking at the weird scene, voices of bewilderment started rising.

“.....Understood.”

“Eh? Your highness Cardinal!?”

Towards the mysterious words of Sariel, Ars decided to obey them.

The 2 with the second highest authority suddenly crawled underneath the table. There was no one who could understand the meaning behind it. For a moment, a dumfounded atmosphere comes inside the room. But the one who brought this atmosphere Sariel along with Ars paid no attention to it. This was because for Ars, the words of an Apostle were always meant to be trusted in.

And as a result of that trust, Ars realized that he had made the right decision.

zuzun—

Vibrations as if coming from the depths of the earth, the sound of the building creaking, and vibrations strong enough to jolt the whole body.

“It, It’s an earthquake!?”

Someone’s shout, clearly expressed the current situation.

At this moment, an earthquake of magnitude reaching 6 had just occurred here.

“uu, uwaaaaaa!!”

Screams were coming from everywhere. A bookshelf kept inside the room toppled over and fell on the chairs.

Within the cries of people Ars , ‘so that’s what it was all about’, looked at Sariel with an understanding gaze.

Even during an earthquake which was rare in the Republic, looking at Sariel who showed no change even in such a situation, Ars did not feel the need to even pray to god for his safety.

And soon the earthquake that caused shaking inside the laboratory calmed down after a few seconds.

Both of them came out from underneath the table. On the floor lay all the of the researchers without any exception.

“Is everyone alright?”

Fortunately, nobody had fainted due to the bookshelf falling over and getting hit. While groaning, one by one all of them unsteadily stood up on their feet.

“ Qui, Quickly we must get out of here.....”

“Please calm down. Is this lab not built using ancient historic ruins? If so then there is no way it’ll collapse with just this.”

“Ye, yes.....It is as you say.”

“Still, this is an emergency. Just to be safe we should evacuate. Priest-dono please take evacuation measures without causing any mass panic.”

Regaining their calm with Ars’ words, the priest and the researchers started taking action. If the organisations top is giving out orders, even if some casualties do appear, the situation should be able to be resolved properly.

Without taking much shock from the sudden earthquake, led by a researcher, Ars and Sariel started to leave the conference room.

“Priest-sama! We have trouble!!”

At that moment, a man in white mantle, probably one of the researchers came running in.

Even with Ars and Sariel in his view he did not seem to notice them meaning he must be very impatient right now.

“Calm down. You are in the presence of the Cardinal and Lord Sariel, also the earthquake has calmed down as well.”

The priest warned him for intruding in such a rude manner.

“That’s not it! During the earthquake—“

As soon as he said that, from below vibrations resounded with a thundering sound.

“Wh, What? Is it another earthquake?”

Towards the Priest who got cold sweat, the researcher shouted the continuation of his previous sentence.

“—No.49 has escaped!!”

Chapter 7 – Freedom

From the time I came to this hellish magical world, this was my first experience of sleeping so deeply. After killing a boy similar to me during the maneuvering experiment, I indifferently kept watching without returning to my self-consciousness as my body faced various experiments daily.

That is why I didn't feel anything even when many other experimented boys and girls were done in by these hands. But this faint overlooking consciousness would soon disappear as my deep sleep continued, and I thought my memories of Kurono Maou would also disappear.

Still, the pain, the agony and killing of similar humans was beyond my limit of tolerance. Slowly disappearing like this was in fact what I wished for.

I have had enough. I cannot return to where I was once. I can't even remember the faces of my parents anymore. All that comes in my mind are the faces of geezer and the masked men wearing that cross and the monsters and other experiments I had killed.

That is why it's fine now. If I disappear now I'll be at ease. There is no need to further cling to this any longer—

And, it was the moment I had given it all up inside my faint consciousness.

zuzun—

With a thunderous sound, and shocks as if the heaven and the earth were overturned, my consciousness rapidly came back.

“——ha!?”

The moment I woke up, I was on the usual hard floor.

But, my head was clearer than ever before, the usual haziness inside my brain and consciousness had completely disappeared. ‘Feeling refreshed’ maybe felt like this?

My self-consciousness returned after a long time, my head is clear, blood and magic both were circulating smoothly, and strength filled my whole body.

“This is.....the lab?”

I must have fallen down from the pedestal in the centre. How did it happen was unknown, but the other 2 masked men had also fallen to the floor.

Did they have an accident during an experiment?

I obviously don't have any obligation to help these guys at all. As I looked around the room while wondering what to do, a certain thing caught my eyes.

I had only seen it once but I soon understood what it was.

“The white...ring.....”

The item with 7 needles which had forced me into absolute submission. The item which once attached, can never be removed was lying in front of me.

I slowly touched my head with my hand. No matter how much I carefully felt around, all that I could feel was my hair and my scalp.

“Not here.....the ring, it's not here.”

Naturally, the ring in front of me was the one that had been attached to my head up till now.

“Ha, hahahaha- -“

The ring was not connected to my head.

The one thing restraining me didn't exist anymore. Before I realized, the ring in my hand had already been crushed by my hand.

“ahahahahaha! I am free!!”

That's right, if I am free, I don't have to obediently die anymore!

Maybe due to my excited shouting, the 2 masked men had started getting up using the wall as support.

I approached the masked man near me,

“What, no.49—“

Whether realizing the situation or not, he raised his voice towards me.

“Don't call me by that name.”

With my left I grabbed his collar and lifted him up.

“guha,ha, st, stop it.....no.49.....”

“My name is—“

I raised my right hand.

My condition is perfect. Black magical power instantly focused in my right hand.

“—Kurono Maou!!!”

With all my might I released my Pile Bunker on that annoying white mask.

Without even raising a single voice, his head was smashed to pieces and he became a headless corpse.

“What are you doing no.49?!”

The other mask came running towards me.

Even if he didn't raise his voice, I could clearly feel his presence. Dealing with him was not a problem.

The masked man tried to stab me with a syringe made of glass as I caught it with my left arm.

“Useless.”

Stealing the syringe just like that, I held it in a reverse grip and took a stance.

“Wait——“

Aiming the nape of the neck I slammed the syringe there.

Maybe I hit a blood vessel, but the poisonous looking liquid inside the syringe was completely injected inside him.

“guhhoooooooo.....”

Holding his neck, the man groaned and fell back on the floor again.

“Rifle.”

Already materialized near my finger, I fire the black bullet on his forehead. With a splash, blood and brains spread all over the floor and the masked man was dead. Since I didn’t know what that liquid was, I would have been troubled he revived after getting stronger like me after all.

“Well then—— I don’t know what’s going on but this is a chance for me.”

The absolute restraints of ring don’t exist anymore. On top it, thanks to the experiments they did on me I have become strong enough to kill even a dragon.

Also, the taboo of murder, though unknowingly, I have already committed. I have absolutely no hesitation while killing these white masked bastards. I was easily able to kill these 2. Just researchers alone would never be able to stop me.

You reap what you sow. The ones who made me into such a monster was them after all. Now that I am free, there is nothing that can stop me from getting out of here.

“Let’s do this!!”

Shouting my usual words to cheer up, I broke through the door—

“——Even though I told you to be careful during the baptism so many times!!”

An angry roar resounds in the conference room.

“Bu, but, the restraint measures were taken as prescribed. He should have been completely powerless.”

“Could the drug resistance be higher than we thought.....?”

“Due to the earthquake, he must have regained his consciousness while the baptism was interrupted.”

“Then call all the guards and capture him!!”

The one who shouted that was the Priest. He came to the conclusion that all the guards must be used to capture no.49 who held a high amount of black magic.

“My humble apologies your highness, the situation is critical, please proceed to evacuation—“

“Calm down Priest-dono, did you not realize why a Cardinal like me came without even a single guard?”

Ars himself knew that the experiment no.49, who had gone out of control, held a high amount of power able to defeat many monsters. But still, he was not worried about a power of ‘that level’.

“Bu, but.....”

The Senior Priest looked towards Sariel who was standing beside Ars. He realized the intention behind Ars’ words.

“But this all sue to our mismanagement. We cannot cause trouble for Lord Sariel—“

“Your worries are unneeded. Lord Sariel, can I leave this to you.”

Sariel gave a small nod.

“It seems it is a dangerous one, there is no need to capture him alive.”

Giving another nod, Sariel left with small steps.

“Well shall we go then? There is no need to panic. Soon Lord Sariel will return with the head of this no.49.”

Chapter 8 – The Fear of the White

“Shit! Where is the exit...?”

Although I kind of knew it, but this facility is really excessively big. On top of it, everything looks the same. There is no way I could not get lost.

Earlier, I kicked apart a white-coloured light armour wearing group but now I am regretting not letting one of them live and getting the info about the exit. Well, it couldn't be helped. They came out of nowhere at me while brandishing their swords after all!

Counter attacking instantly and killing them all is kind of a habit from those maneuvering experiments.

Incidentally, I also took 2 of those double-edged swords from them as well. I don't really have any experience in using swords but my use for them is a bit different. The next time I find someone I'll use the sword to threaten them into telling me the location of the exit.

As I ran through the passage while thinking this, I arrived at a spacious room.

“Stairs!”

Stairs lay on the opposite side of the room leading to the upper floor.

Finally finding a thread of hope in getting out of this place, I ran towards the stairs but stopped as I sensed something coming down those stairs. Under the various experiments, along with the 5 senses, even my 6th sense had been strengthened so this wasn't just my imagination.

As I took a fighting stance, the sound of footsteps resounded.

Soon, the owner of the footsteps came into view from beyond the dark stairs.

“A girl?”

My expectation of it being masked men or armoured ones was instantly betrayed.

The one who appeared was a completely white girl except for her burning red eyes. She had a young yet beautiful face. And the overly white skin made me think for a moment that she might be another light golem, but the girl in front of me clearly possessed a life force.

Not a doll, but a real albino.

“Stop!”

Although she doesn’t match this place, the white clothes and the cross emblem clearly means that she is related to those masked men.

Without letting down my guard, I first tried to speak words to stop her.

“.....”

The girl stopped moving.

“Who are you?”

Maybe because I didn’t expect it to suddenly turn into a battle, as I hesitated over what I should say, I ended up asking about her identity.

Although as I was sure that she wasn’t an ally I didn’t really expect her to answer but.

“7th Apostle, Sariel.”

Strangely, she properly answered.

Although I had no idea what kind of meaning the title of an Apostle meant, I came to know that her name was Sariel.

“My name is Kurono Maou, I want to leave this place so can you tell me where the exit is?”

“I cannot.”

“Is that so—“

Well, I didn’t really expect her to tell me. Although I was a bit curious as to who this girl was, but I didn’t really have the time to care or inquire about it.

If I was against a masked man I would have kicked till he told me but I can’t really do that to a girl against whom I don’t have any grudges. Although I may have lost my humanity, I still haven’t gone that mad.

Therefore, I decide to ignore her and move forward.

Instantly focusing magic in my legs and strengthening them, I take a rocket start towards the stairs.

An ordinary man or a weak monster would barely be able to keep up with such speed. For that it might have been like I instantly disappeared—

“ugaah!?!“

The moment I suddenly accelerated, a shock ran through my left leg.

Losing control over my left leg momentarily, I fell to the hard floor at high speed.

“Wh..at.....”

I found that on my left thigh, a white stake was sticking in very deep.

“You will stop here.”

As I heard Sariel’s muttering voice, a chill ran down my spine.

“Are you kidding me.....”

From that girl, I felt an intense magical power, at a level incomparable to any monster, surge from within her. The silver aura enveloping her body, even in a gas-like state, had more density than my pile bunker.

Even if I didn't have any 6th sense I would have realized that she was an unbelievable monster.

“Buckshot!!”

Pulling out the white stake, I fired a buckshot towards her.

The scattering black bullets rush towards the defenceless girl.

Without even a slight reaction, Sariel took on the hail of bullets with her body directly without any problems.

“Shit, without even a shield?!”

The bullets disappeared the moment they touched the white aura.

Her aura is far stronger than the shield used by me or any other experiments. For her it was nothing more than releasing magical energy and was not even actual magic.

Even I have magical energy that is released like that as a part of regeneration, but it holds nowhere near the ability to block a bullet made of black magical energy.

If she can block without doing anything, buckshot cannot be used as a method of restraining the opponent either. It would be a waste of magical energy.

Still, the white magical energy that is the source of the aura is completely different from the one I know.

If using black magical energy results in black magic, then is that white magic?

Frankly, I really don't want to fight something that dangerous but

my body has already started moving towards the direction of fighting.

“Blackening.”

In my both hands I have the 2 swords I took earlier. The simple longswords were wrapped by my black magical energy and turned completely black from the grip to the tip of the sword. I simply named this condition as [blackening].

The weapons that undergo blackening don't just get stronger but also become able to be used without even moving my hands.

“Automatic Fencing(sword fighting lit.).”

The two blackened swords leave my hand and start floating in the air. The tip of the swords automatically turns towards my opponent.

Fighting while controlling from afar, that is Automatic Fencing.

When using existing weapons as the base for this, the strength is higher than bullets made purely of magical energy. If it's this, it should be able to surpass that aura.

“Pierce through!!”

With my voice, the swords fly like arrows.

Sariel stood there as usual but in front of her white magic started concentrating. And what appeared was a white shield in the shape of an inverted triangle.

“ Rifle!”

I fired the pseudo full metal jacket bullet, and at the same time the swords struck Sariel's shield.

Both of the swords were easily deflected without even scratching the shield. But without minding it, I kept firing the Rifle. The strength was lower than Anti-material but instead rapid-fire was possible.

But, it's a shield that didn't take a scratch from the blackened swords, it wouldn't have any effect no matter how many bullets I fire.

Even when the point of impact was exactly the same, no effect could be seen. Zero plus zero will always be zero after all.

But, I didn't mind that.

The Rifle was just a diversion to keep her focus her. The main intention lied in the two previously deflected swords.

Sariel put up a shield to counter those swords meant that it would have dangerous for her without it. Buckshot could be stopped with just the aura but the swords could not be.

I start controlling the swords that had fallen behind her again.

Aim is obviously the currently undefended Sariel's back.

The attack power is enough to cause instant death but she is also a magician, she might be able to get out alive. Apologising inside my thoughts, I make the swords fly at her at maximum speed.

Sariel doesn't turn back—a certain hit.

“—Wha?”

The moment the swords were about to pierce through that small back of hers, Sariel didn't move at all.

But, right now Sariel somehow held the two swords between the fingers of her right hand.

With just her bare hands?

Just how?

“.....”

Stuck between Sariel's thin fingers, the black swords instantly turned white and disappeared like ash.

“u,a.....”

Can't win.

Instinct, intuition, reasoning, logic, all of them are giving the same conclusion- I cannot win.

I made the wrong choice. I should have never challenged her to a fight.

I should turned and run away at full speed the moment I felt that insane magical energy.

In actuality, there was no need for her to use a shield. No matter how much magic I used, she could have easily overwhelmed it with just her body.

The moment I had entered her line of sight, I could have been killed anytime. I was just left alive because of a simple whim of hers.

In my mind, I had a vision of disappearing like ash similar to the blackened swords.

“.....”

Sariel deactivated her shield.

—Run, my instincts called.

—Run, I can still make it, my reasoning tried to encourage me.

Don't give up just yet! There should be a way to get out of here alive. First of all, I should run. I have to get away from that insane monster no matter how otherwise I don't have a free tomorrow.

“Black smoke—guah!?”

I tried to use a concealment technique derived from the black flames used by the experiment I fought before.

By spraying out the black magic I could activate the magic without any gaps, but finding that small gap, my right shoulder and

abdomen were pierced by white stakes.

Still, the magic itself was activated, and the surroundings were instantly covered in black smoke. Inside the black smoke I run back towards the way I came from. It's regretful, but the stairs are too far away.

The first wound I took on my leg was covered with jelly like magical energy. For the time being the bleeding can be stopped, and my body is weak enough to be bothered by pain of this level.

Once again strengthening my legs, I decide to run as far away from her as possible.

The stakes stuck in my shoulder and abdomen comes later.

“Anti-material.”

Without turning around I consecutively fired three high calibre bullets towards her. I am well aware that it won't work but at least it could help gain me some time. The moment the third bullet was fired, 5 stakes instantly pierced my back. I had actually deployed a shield just in case but the stakes completely passed through it.

“Guhoooo!?”

I almost fell over but was somehow able to manage to continue running through the passage.

The ones that struck my back were thinner than the previous ones so I was able to handle the shock. And, without looking back, crazily running, I rolled inside a random room.

“haa.....haa...”

For the time being I think I was able to run away from her. The sound of footsteps or the feeling of her presence is not coming.

I don't think I was able to completely run away from her, so in this time I should treat my wounds as much as possible.

“Guh, it hurts.....”

Can't say I have gotten used to pain, only my ability to handle it has increased. What's painful will always be painful.

I pulled out the stakes in my shoulder and abdomen and although it was difficult to reach I was somehow able to pull out the stakes in my back as well.

"I'll be fine as long as my internal organs have not been damaged as well..."

The jelly like magic covering the wounds, if given enough time, will assimilate with the flesh and heal. I wondered whether I needed to disinfect it, but since it makes a complete recovery, it's fine I guess? Thanks to this magic, I was able to treat most of my wounds by myself.

But internal organs with complex functions were unable to be perfectly healed.

Once, when my stomach was completely torn apart by a dinosaur like thing, I was unable to perfectly regenerate my intestines and in the end had to depend on the masked men's magic for complete recovery.

Just how much can be accomplished through magic is still a doubt but I don't have the methods necessary to find out. For now I should think about what I should do from here.

That super dangerous magician girl called Sariel wouldn't let me get away that easily after all.

Sariel's five senses should be much better than mine so she could find me simply through scent. In the worst case she might just 'somehow' figure it out through her sixth sense.

So, I can't really hide here for too long. The risk is too high.

—kotsun

I heard the slight sound of footsteps.

Similar to the time she first came, she is walking calmly and slowly.

Still, the fact that there is no carelessness in her was clearly seen in the previous fight.

Gradually the sound of footsteps is increasing; she is definitely coming straight towards this room.

“Sh, shit! What should I do.....?”

This is not at a level like those previous monsters where I could win if I tried hard.

In front of an absolute gap in ability, it's hard to say that I am able to keep composure.

But I still realized that there was another door in this room different from the one I came in from.

Can't say that I had any plan, I just felt that rather than going outside, it might be better to go further inside.

Although it will be checkmate there and then if it was a simple room beyond that door.,

“—this is!!”

The moment I opened the door, I felt that I was too lucky today.

What lied beyond the door was not another white room, but a long spiral staircase leading downwards.

On looking, it was pitch black there. I didn't know where it would connect to but if I am able to take even a little distance from Sariel, it felt extremely attractive. Without any hesitation, I ran down at full speed.

Sariel was walking through the passage at her usual speed.

She was not walking like this just to induce fear in the weak magician known as No.49—no, Kurono Maou, a foreigner who had a name similar to the Devil King.

To sense and perfectly track a user of black magic, this was the

suitable speed. That is why she did not run. And also because she was clearly showing sympathy towards Kurono.

If she was serious she could have put all those 8 stakes inside of his head instead. Of course, even before Kurono could start attacking.

But she let the opponent, who she could kill in an instant, run away from her.

From here if she were to end up cornering him and he surrendered, she was ready to take that surrender. Although her true feelings were that it would be good if he could run away from her.

“.....”

Still, Sariel thought. Kurono's black magic was not at the level as she had assumed.

Under the effect of many experiments, his body had surpassed the level of ordinary man even without strengthening, but he did not possess the basic fundamental skill or basis required for magic.

At the current stage of the project, the main objective was to create a body holding high aptitude for magic. And the practical and technical knowledge of combat and magic was to be taught from here on. So it was only natural that it was so.

The amount of magical energy is high but circulation, compression, emission and other magical energy control techniques are all rough. The releasing of compressed magic one shot at a time with a single action in itself wasted a lot of magical energy.

The weapon enchantment was extremely irregular, but the precision of remote control and concealment of presence was good. To be able to perceive things outside the view was also done easily. But, to be able to give off attack power equal to an ordinary magician without the minimum required fundamental skill was due to the benefits of body modifications after all.

But, what actually surprised Sariel was not the strength attained due to the experiments but the scheme behind the fired magic.

[Buckshot], [Rifle], [Anti-material] magic fired by chanting it, all had substance in the shape of clear, streamlined cones, and were rotating at high speed as it approached.

Magic is made through images so all magicians, when performing single action, take the shape of orbs, arrows, sword, throwing spear. In Sariel's case it is Stakes.

But in terms of piercing power, Sariel had never seen anything like that rotating cone ever before.

Once properly understood, it can be done by anyone, but where did the idea behind such structure came from?

If her opinion, it might be because he was a natural genius.

But he was a 'foreigner' brought from a different world where magic does not exist. The Church treats those unable to use magic on the same level as monsters.

But don't 'foreigners' also have knowledge as per their own foreign world? No, they definitely possess it.

And, if that cone was created by that foreigner, then Kurono had applied it into his magic aware of the fact that it possessed high piercing power.

Sariel thought that her theory was probably correct. And if it is correct, then they should possess knowledge not known to us as well.

She was a bit curious about it, and if he were to be caught again, he would not be allowed to live, in the worst case she would have to kill him here. She felt it was a bit regrettable.

“.....”

Sariel suddenly stopped moving.

She had no doubt that the door in front of her was passed by Kurono. For a second, Sariel hesitates over whether she should enter or not.

But, now that she was here, she felt would have to make sure and defencelessly opened the door.

There was no ambush or signs of a trap.

Well he didn't really have time to set something like this up so it's only obvious. She thought as she moved towards the different exit inside the room.

Opening the door, what entered her view was a dim spiral staircase leading downwards.

Without descending through the stairs, Sariel threw her body in the space in the centre of the stairs and fell straight towards the unseen hell below.

dozunn!!

Without strengthening her body with magic she landed just like that.

She stood up as she felt almost no shock on landing, but the tiles near her foot had been smashed to pieces.

“.....Ran away.”

She verified in a single look that he was not here. That is because, at the end of the staircase lay a small well directly connected to an underground water channel. And the remains of black magic could be seen continuing inside that well.

This place is meant for the clergy to cleanse themselves and the only place leading out of the laboratory aside from the main entrance.

It must have been a coincidence that he entered the room leading here but thanks to it he was able to get away from here.

“.....that's good.”

Moving towards the well, Sariel quietly said.

From the perspective of a girl who was indifferent towards humans and completely expressionless, it was remarkable that can be considered extremely rare.

As to why she showed such sympathy towards Kurono, that was because his circumstances were extremely similar to hers in the past.

Chapter 9 – Port Town

*kotsun**kotsun*

Footsteps can be heard far away.

A small white figure with shining red eyes started coming closer

“.....uooh!?”

Shit! Did I just lose consciousness for a moment!?

I quickly stand up and scan the surroundings. I can't feel any other presence. What came to my ears was not the footsteps of the white girl but the sound of the river flowing close by.

“Wh, what the hell happened....?”

I had unhesitatingly jumped into the well that was in the place where the spiral staircase ended. I could hear the sound of water flowing below the well, and hoped that there might be an underground channel that might connect outside.

That plan was brilliantly successful, and now I was standing on ground.

However, I was afraid that it might continue infinitely underground, and when I jumped it was completely dark as well, the water was very cold too. As I flowed I almost lost heart due to fear and anxiety.

But luckily, the dark underground waterway (maybe I should call it a cave) finally opened up somewhere sunlight could reach, and fainted after barely making to the riverbank.

“Aah, I'm outside.”

The sun was shining right above me in the sky, a river flowed beside me, and the surroundings were covered with thick trees and beyond them towering mountains could be seen. I am completely

between nature and greenery.

“I did it. I am finally free—“

With a rustling sound the thicket nearby shook.

For a second, my heartbeat became faster and I started sweating unpleasantly.

What came into my mind was the indifferent white face of Sariel.

“.....”

What appeared was an animal very similar to a deer. It probably came to drink water at the river. On looking closely, in that direction many other bodies were also there.

By the way, the reason I intentionally used the expression ‘similar to a deer’ was because I was certain that it was not a deer. This deer-like animal had 3 brilliant horns which were green in colour. A fantastic animal like that didn’t exist in my world.

Well, if they evolved in this world, maybe such deer might be born as well. After all, this is a world of magic where even a fire breathing dragon exists. In the first place, does Darwin’s theory of evolution even apply in this world?

“Wait wait, before that, I should run far away from here first.”

I am somewhat tired but the wounds give by Sariel have more or less healed, so moving around is not a problem. At times like these, I was thankful for this modified overly sturdy body.

But still, even with a body like this there are beings above monsters against whom I can do nothing.

Maybe, guys like that might exist all over the world. If that is so, then it will be dangerous to overestimate my abilities. If a bunch of similar guys come to search for me, I am finished.

Where is safe? Where should I go? That is still unknown but at least I need to go as far as possible from that facility.

“Time to leave.”

Without any guide or directions, I decided to go downstream from here.

The fear of the fact that I might be still chased after by Sariel, kept my legs moving even when my stamina had run out.

I kept walking for 3 days and 3 nights straight through mountains and forests. I only stopped for toilet and to drink water from the river.

I thought I might upset my stomach like this, but to me who had been living on shit-like soup, the clear water of the river was way too delicious. In the end I did not upset my stomach. Though, it did become a bit flabby because I drank too much. And at times when I was attacked by dog or wolf like monster, I chased them away with buckshot and rifle, but didn't chase them too far.

And on the evening of the fourth day,

“.....lights.”

In front, I saw lights of people living. As I saw it I started running with joy. But, in the middle I thought.

“Wait, it could be people connected to those masked men.”

Maybe researchers, in the worst case, Sariel herself could be there.

I don't know anything about this world except that it has monsters and magic. On top of not having common sense, this ragged look would definitely catch attention.

Catching attention meant standing out in public, as a runaway I want to avoid that at all costs.

And this might be negative thinking, but there is a chance that I have already been put on the wanted list.

As an experimental subject, I didn't know how much value I held for those masked men. If this was a country wide large scale

project, they would go through any lengths to search for me. Basically, it was dangerous for me to carelessly come in contact with the people of this world.

As I thought that, the town had come into my view. Enduring my want to see other people, I held my breath and decided to infiltrate the town.

This was a port town surrounded by a stone wall. A salty breeze floated in the air.

I came to this conclusion after watching the people come and go through the gate and going all around without getting noticed by any soldiers.

And, I confirmed that this world's civilisation level was at the Middle-ages level.

The stone wall might have been left due to cultural reasons but it was actively being used. The roads were not made of asphalt, people in armour with lances, the light at night was due to fire lamps, etc. There was not even a single modernistic thing familiar to me.

From the time I was in that experiment facility, I had expected that it might be so as there was no electritown, and monsters were equipped with swords and bows. But after seeing this typical town, my expectations were right it seems.

“It really is a different world.....”

I felt a bit of despair creeping in, but right now I didn't have the time to be worried due to the anxiety in my heart.

I'll look for a way to get back to my world after I have settled somewhere far away from here. Once again, I return my thoughts to the town in front of me. The fact that this is a port town might be favourable for me.

Rather than going by land, I could go farther and faster through the sea. At least, in a world where aeroplanes don't probably exist, ships are the fastest means for moving.

Of course, that's only if there is no magic device through which you could warp or teleport.

Anyway, for me who has no other objective other than going as far away as possible, a ship is an attractive existence. Here, by any means possible, I want to board the ship that is going the farthest from here.

Of course, I, who can't come into contact with other people and without any money, have no will to properly board a ship.

Basically, I'll smuggle myself.

"Alright, now that I have decided my objective, I should go to the town now."

Making sure that there are no people in the vicinity, I put my hand on the wall.

On the precisely crated vertical wall there is no place to place my legs. That means it's the turn for the reliable black magic. I convert the black magical energy into sharp material in front of my hands and legs.

If I try hard I can even cut through the scales of a dragon, cutting through a stone wall is a piece of cake.

And thus began my first ever wall climbing challenge.

The strong claws unified with my fingertips cut through the stone wall as if cardboard was cut with a knife. Similarly, my legs also pierce through, and easily fix into the wall.

The height of the wall is about 5 meters. It's not really a wall climb with the life on the line but if it's my body, I'll probably be unscathed even if I fall from the top. The ground is pretty soft as well. And, thus while grasping the essentials of wall climbing, I steadily quickly climbed the wall.

"ooh, I'm like a ninja, aren't I?"

And thus, while feeling like those who melt into the night, I

finished the climb.

If I stood up on the wall to make a pose, I felt that I would be seen after all, so while crouching I viewed the interior of the town.

“ooh, although I had expected, it really is amazing.....”

There, the townscape similar to that of ancient Europe only seen in movies and anime could be seen.

Along with stronger eyesight, I had also become able to clearly see at night. So, I could perfectly see the town even in this dark night.

Rows of white coloured houses, the biggest main road was made of stone, and stores with lamps releasing light could be seen. During the day, the roads must be filled with carriages with goods moving around.

And at the centre of the town stood a church with the tallest roof. Moving further down the main street, you would arrive at the port where many ships were currently anchored.

It's currently night, so not many people can be seen other than on the main street. The residential area has already become quite after putting out the lights.

“Moving towards the port along the wall sounds good.”

After memorizing the panoramic view of the town and deciding a rough route to the port, jumped down from the stone wall.

Height like the spiral staircase would be dangerous but a height of around 5 meters isn't much of a problem.

With a *dotto* dull sound, I landed on the ground and quickly moved away from there. While at maximum attention, I quickly ran through the alleys of the residential area.

Chapter 10 – Pandora Continent

Due to residential area being asleep at this time, I was able to reach the port safely without being seen by anyone.

I couldn't exactly risk creeping into any random ship, so I hid myself in a warehouse like place where goods meant to be loaded or maybe taken from the ships were kept, and carefully looked at the surroundings.

Although I call it a warehouse, giant containers like in the present world don't exist, so they were only buildings at the height of 2 stories max.

Maybe because it was night, there was no one going in and out of the warehouses, and only the biggest warehouse seemed to have lights burning indicating that people were working there.

I attentively approached that warehouse and peeked inside. It seems they were hurriedly loading the goods here in a certain ship.

I tried to listen carefully to the talk of the men working inside and was able to catch some of it.

“Why so late—“

“Seriously, we didn't even have had time to drink after returning.”

Men with very sailor-like big and darkish bodies were carrying goods while complaining about something. Especially big cargo was put on the carriage stopped near the entrance.

“—but, is there any need to sail out in the middle of the night?”

“It's a hurried re-supply of goods, or something like that.”

“What do you mean by hurried re-supply? It's not like we are at war.”

Resupply goods meant that the ship belonged to the army of this world, no, country it seems. The country doesn't seem to be at war, but it's a world filled with monsters after all. There is an opponent to fight daily for them.

"No, I don't know if it's pioneering or further colonisation, but the actual place seems to be in quite a mess."

"That's why they are always recruiting mercenaries? It was a good decision to not go."

They said something about [Pioneering] and [Colonisation]? What? Is this world still in the Age of exploration and discovery?

But to so smoothly talk about [mercenaries] like this really gives of a fantasy feel.

Anyway, this might be a chance for me. If this is like the colonial ruling done by the western countries as taught in our world history, then this [colony] would be a far away land from this country beyond the sea.

"What the hell do they mean by 'Pandora continent is heaven filled with riches'? It's just a hell filled with demons and monsters."

Hmm [Pandora Continent]..

I don't know whether it has any connection with the Pandora's Box, but by their way of speaking, it seems it is a totally different continent not connected by land.

Running away to that far away Pandora Continent sounds ideal. And by the sounds of it, the colonisation doesn't seem to be moving smoothly as well. Then it would be impossible for them to do wide search for me there.

Living a survival based life far away from home in an unexplored region similar to the old Japan war is not something I cannot do. Sure, it won't be very comfortable, but compared to living in that experiment facility, it was similar to heaven.

Maybe, I could even take shelter with these [Demons]. I don't know

whether this [Demons] literally means a demonic race or is meant as a derogatory word for the ones originally living there, but as long as they are kept on the same level as monsters, it means they would have no connection to those masked men.

At least the geezer and the masked seem to be of the same race as the ones carrying the goods, basically humans. That means they are not of the same race as the ones living on the Pandora continent.

To run away from those masked men, my maximum priority is to get on this ship going towards the Pandora continent. I have decided I'll cross over to the Pandora continent!

“Well then, how should I board it—“

Worshiping the White light God and carrying crosses, the ones who controlled the west-side of the Arc continent was the Syncorea republic.

The Holy City Elysion, ‘the city which has received the divine protection of light’, is the capital of the Republic and also the sacred ground for the church.

Inside one of the many churches that existed in Elysion, the chief of the White Sacrament Third Laboratory, Bishop Judas was meeting with the 7th Apostle Sariel.

“——then you fought while in sealed state?”

“Yes.”

The two sat on one the benches beside each other with some distance between them.

Although they didn’t look at each other while talking, Judas suddenly moved his line of sight towards Sariel.

“.....Come.”

With a single word, on top of Sariel’s head, a ring giving off white light appeared.

It was a different one from the one put on experiment No.49, but it was definitely the same type attached to human experiments for thought control.

Judas stretched his hand towards the ring and lightly moved his finger.

“Magical energy restriction limit at 80%, technique chaining in freeze state, armaments not allowed——maximum sealed state huh?”

On the ring, the health and actions of the person are recorded as well, and the supervisor/controller has the right to read it. Judas was reading the records of the battle with No.49.”

“Yes, there was no time to get release authorization.”

“Even though the Cardinal was right beside you?.....It seems he really has a habit of overestimating the powers of the Apostles.”

As his(Ars') tough face came to his mind, he also remembered that Ars was also unusually attached to Sariel.

Even though he is known for his cleverness and cool-headedness, to feel obligated just because his life was once saved in the past, it seems Ars has a strange honest part in him as well.

“There was insufficiency in facing experiment no.49. Cardinal Ars' decision was not wrong.”

“But you cannot call it correct either.”

“.....”

Just in case, he should have given release authority at that time.

Even an Apostle, under the biggest seal, cannot show power more than first class magicians.

“There is no one here other than me. No matter what you say, it won't reach anyone else's ears.”

“No, even if I was not sealed, I could not have stopped the escape of no.49.”

“That may be so. You let him go intentionally after all. The amount of power used was not a factor.”

Judas didn’t realize, but Sariel was slightly frowning right now.

“I’m not going start blaming now. The moment he was out of our control, it was all our responsibility.”

The ones who summoned the foreigner known as [Kurono Maou] to this world and turned his body into black magic user experiment no.49 were Bishop Judas himself and his subordinate researchers after all. Sariel only happened to be there and pursued him out of ‘good will’ towards the co-operators. Even if she failed, she was in position to be criticized.

Although, the only one in the Syncorea Republic who had the authority to reprimand an Apostle was the top the church i.e. the Pope only.

“Rather than that, what surprised me more is that you took an action based on emotions. I had long forgotten that you also once used to be human.”

Sariel this time showed absolutely no reaction at all.

Even if Judas’ words held sarcasm or contempt, she had long lost the emotional ability to mind such things.

“Well it’s alright; let’s end this as per schedule. Living in the Holy City is boring but that doesn’t mean I have free time.”

Judas once again touched the ring still shining above Sariel’s head.

“.....Disappear.”

The moment he said that, the ring scattered after getting smashed to pieces and vanished after becoming grains of light.

“With this, there is nothing to left to restrain you, you can even kill

me right here.”

“Thank you, but you’re taking the joke too far Bishop.”

“All those who had their seal removed would straight away aim for my life you know. Of course, you are only the second to have the seal completely removed though.”

The first one without the seal, no.49, if he appeared, Judas was sure he would try to kill him(Judas) without any exception.

But, he doubted no.49, whose whereabouts were still unknown, would go through all the risk just for revenge.

After all he was made to life through days where dying would be better. If for some reason he got caught, the risk of returning to those days was too high. He wouldn’t throw away his valuable freedom just for the sake of revenge.

Even if he was an irrational fool, then he would be too scared and will instinctually not decide on revenge.

Judas was that aware of the gravity of the acts he did, but still he felt neither regret nor guilt.

“Well, with this I’m done with my business here. You also have some work to do right? Who and how many do you have to kill next?”

“Demons and monsters. I’ll kill as many as required till the whole continent can be claimed.”

“Reclamation huh? Then the next place you’ll be dispatched to is..”

“Yes, Pandora Continent.”